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December 29, 2005

Statewide Planning Office
Division of Program Development
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Dear Governor Murkowski:

Thank you for considering my comments on the Draft Fiscal Year 2006-2008 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). With the removal of the Knik Arm Crossing and Gravina Island Bridge earmarks, we now have an opportunity to adequately fund critically needed, and already prioritized transportation projects throughout the state.

When the initial bridge earmarks were announced, many people (including state and federal officials) thought the bridge funding was in addition to our normal funding levels. As we all now know, that was not the case. The bridge funding soaked up at least one half of all of the state's federal transportation funds. This was catastrophic – critical transportation projects would have been completely wiped off the books because of inadequate funding.

But now, with the earmarks removed, we can set our own priorities. Because over one half of the State's transportation budget over the next three years would be consumed by the Knik Arm Bridge, the Gravina Island Bridge, and the Juneau Road, I propose that we delete those three projects and instead direct the money to more critical projects such as:

\$311 million for Seward Highway safety and congestion relief improvements.
\$210 million for improvements to the Glenn Highway, millions for projects in the Fairbanks area.
\$323 million for the Community Transportation Program.
\$256 million for projects deemed critical for construction of the gas pipeline.

I believe it is far more important to fix the existing traffic and transportation problems throughout our state, before spending any money on those 3 projects.

The Department of Transportation now has a unique opportunity to re-evaluate how we should spend our transportation dollars. Be assured that there will be vigorous public debate on our statewide transportation priorities, and I urge you to **delete** the controversial Knik Arm Bridge, Gravina Bridge, and Juneau Roads **completely** in the next Amendment to FY2006-2008 STIP.

Sincerely,

Stephanie A. Kesler

cc: State Legislature